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ABSTRACT

This study evaluated Metropolitan State College of Denver's Teacher-in-Residence (TiR) alternative licensure program. To participate, teacher candidates must possess a baccalaureate degree, have a teaching contract in a participating local school district, enroll in the TiR program, and pass a state content test. This study examined what Metro State could learn about the development of quality teacher candidates and how it could improve its alternative and traditional certification programs. Surveys of Metro State student teachers, teacher educators, and public school mentors indicated that skills in classroom management/discipline were considered the most important teaching skills needed prior to student teaching or alternative placement (followed by standards/content knowledge, and time management/organization). Respondents believed that organizational and communication skills could be developed in alternative settings. TiR teachers and student teachers believed that better communication was needed for collaborative teamwork, while faculty and mentors felt that more meetings would improve collaboration. TiR teachers and student teachers felt that modeling, coaching, guided practice, and self-directed trial-and-error were very useful in developing skills. Most respondents believed that developing and assessing teachers' softer qualities (e.g., caring and empathy) was possible through observation and modeling. (Contains 20 references.) (SM)

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2002

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A COMPARISON OF THE ALTERNATIVE AND TRADITIONAL LICENSURE PROGRAMS AT METROPOLITAN STATE COLLEGE OF DENVER

by

Ernest L. Heyman, Ed.D.

During the Fall Semester of 2000, Metropolitan State College of Denver launched the Teacher-in-Residence (TiR) program with over 200 teachers. The program was designed to help relieve a teacher shortage in the metropolitan Denver area. Metro State works in partnership with five local school districts. In order to participate in the program, a candidate must possess a baccalaureate degree, have a teaching contract with one of the participating districts, enroll in the TiR program with Metro State, submit to a background check, and pass a state (PLACE) content test during the first year of employment (Gorze, B., Foster, A., Cobb, B., 2001). The first year concluded with a study conducted by the Research and Development Center for the Advancement of Student Learning, Fort Collins, Colorado. The study focused on the demographics of the individuals entering the progam and, in a follow-up effort, provided some comparisons between participants in alternative licensure programs and traditionally prepared first year teachers (Gorze, B., Foster, A., Cobb, B., 2001).

This study concerns itself with two questions that arose from the Metro State experience with alternative licensure. Number one, what can Metro State learn about the development of quality teacher candidates from this experience? Number two, how can Metro State improve both its alternative and its traditional programs?

Research indicates that teachers licensed through alternative programs, generally speaking, can be as competent and effective as those licensed through traditional teacher education programs (McKibben, 1998, 2001; Stafford and Barrow, 1994; Hutton, 1987; Newman and Thomas, 1999). Although not all of the research has been positive, Otuya (1992) concluded that the research has been inconclusive. The alternative programs have also had their critics (Darling-Hammond, 1998; and Shields et al, 1998). These critics generally cite minimal training, minimal skills, and learning-on-the-job as severe program shortcomings. It appears that the minimal skills and training have, in many cases, been overcome by the on-the-job learning. On the positive side, Edelfeldt (1994) concluded the problem of access to teaching by older individuals had been addressed, even Wise and Darling-Hammond (1991) acknowledged this opportunity. If we, for the moment, for whatever reasons, acknowledge a limited success of some of these programs, what can both the alternative and traditional programs learn from the experience?

A review of the literature indicates common threads running through successful alternative programs. It should be noted that these common threads apply in a somewhat similar fashion to traditional programs. First, TEAMWORK. Successful programs feature collaborative effort among the stakeholders, that is, the teacher educators, the experienced K-12 teachers, and the teachers in training. The collaborative effort includes parity in decision making, joint teaching efforts involving higher education and public school personnel, a coordinated support system with shared information, and a coordinated assessment system (Thomas & Kjelgaard, 1998; McKibben, 2001). After studying the Dallas Independent School District alternative certification program, Hutton

(1987) concluded that school districts and institutions of teacher education needed to find ways to collaborate better. Second, LEARNING-ON-THE-JOB. Particularly in the alternative programs, candidates must learn on the job. It is much more "trial-by-fire" than a pre-student teaching, or even a student teaching experience. This requires almost instantaneous integration of theory and practice. At this stage, programs variously utilize modeling, coaching, direct teaching, seminars and experiential learning approaches. This is clearly a rich program development area for any performance based program (McKibben, 2001). Third, SUPPORT. This thread is closely related to learning-on-the-job, however, it has been emphasized as the most important and powerful element of an alternative program (McKibben, 2001). The support system usually includes mentors, seminars, and the use of cohort groups. The support needs to be site-based, available immediately and provided by high-quality, paid professionals (McKibben, 2001). It is the support system which seems to help the candidate become a reflective, self correcting learner (McKibben & Giblin, 1999). Fourth, the PRE-INTERNSHIP PROGRAM. Whereas the traditional programs offer six to ten teacher education courses prior to student teaching, the alternative programs offer a more compressed version of pedagogical preparation. In California, these programs vary from 120 to 160 clock hours (McKibben, 2001). From a content standpoint, research indicates additional work is needed in classroom management and organizational skills (Marchant, 1990). McKibben (2001) reports that programs also address planning, classroom procedural issues, developmental issues and generic pedagogical skills. Most programs also adjusted their program to include more on parent conferencing skills and the teaching of reading skills.

The review of the literature identifies numerous areas that are rich with potential for program development. In particular, questions arise concerning the improvement of teamwork, support, learning in the field, and essential knowledge prior to working in a classroom. Given the success of many alternative program candidates, what teaching skills can be effectively developed in settings other than those provided by a teacher education program? And, how can these skills be accurately assessed? How can teamwork and support be improved? How can we cause more skill development in on-the-job-learning? Finally, an interesting question appears. Hawk (1991) addresses the question of identifying the characteristics of a quality teacher. Hawk notes that when recalling the teacher who made a difference in their lives most people remember a teacher who, among other thing, exhibited certain personal characteristics, such as:

1. Caring
2. Empathy
3. A positive nature, believing in all students' worth and ability to learn
4. Love of learning

If these characteristics are indeed important, and most would agree they are, what can a teacher education program do to assess these characteristics in potential teaching candidates? And, what can programs do to develop these characteristics in teaching candidates?

The above questions were incorporated into a survey that was administered during the winter of 2001-2002. Ninety-two surveys were completed. The surveys fell into four groups: Metro State student teachers (30), TiR (28), Metro State teacher education

faculty (19 of 33), and mentors (15 of 26) from the Aurora Public Schools component of the Metro State TiR program.

The Results of the Survey

Since the number of surveys in this study is relatively small, the results are reported out as indicators. More than any one thing, the results and the discussion of implications call for further study of particular concerns.

Question 1 asked respondents to identify the four most important teaching skills/knowledge needed before the commencement of student teaching or an alternative placement. All groups responded similarly with classroom management/discipline (70%) as the most frequently identified item. All groups (58% of the respondents) also ranked standards/content knowledge very high. Also ranked highly were organization/time management (41%) and lesson/unit planning (40%). There was, however, a marked difference between respondents from the traditional programs and the respondents from the TiR program with regard to organization/time management. The TiR respondents (teachers and mentors) identified this item (56%) with a much greater frequency than the traditional program respondents (27%). Interestingly, the TiR mentors also identified personal stability factors as important (33%). This category included such items as stamina, flexibility, sense of reality, not easily overwhelmed, ability to change in mid-stream, and ability to ask for help. No other group identified these qualities as essential. Mentors apparently see a need for personal stability when an individual is faced with massive on-the-job-learning, as it is in an alternative licensure program.

Question 2(a) asked which skills, necessary for effective teaching, can be developed in settings other than those provided by a teacher education. And 2(b) asked how these skills can be accurately assessed before full-time placement in a classroom. Only organizational skills (49%) and communication skills (41%) were identified by all four groups as skills able to be developed in other settings. In Question 2(b), the respondents identified three general ways that these skills might be assessed prior to placement in a classroom. Fifty-one percent identified observation of teaching as an assessment tool. They suggested observation while substitute teaching or while conducting a pre-planned demonstration lesson. Second, twenty-nine percent suggested the use of written materials such as work samples, units, references, transcripts, tests, or portfolios. Third, fifteen percent of the respondents identified an interview as a means of assessment, either an interview of the candidate directly or an interview with those familiar with the work of the candidate.

Question 3 asked for ways the collaborative, teamwork effort in Metro's teacher preparation programs might be improved. The TiR teachers and the student teachers had a little different take on this question than the faculty/mentors group. Forty-three percent of this group felt that better communication (in particular regarding expectations, assignments, and program objectives) was needed. Among the faculty and mentors, forty-four percent felt that more meetings, including discussions and training, would improve collaboration.

Question 4 focused on the development of teaching skills. The TiR's and the student teachers were asked to rate (0-4) the effectiveness of four different approaches: modeling, coaching, guided practice, and self-directed trial and error. Both groups rated

all four of the approaches quite high (2.8-3.3). However, there was a noticeable difference with respect to modeling. The traditional program student teachers rated this as having the highest impact (3.3) on their development. The Teachers-in-Residence rated this considerably lower (2.85).

The mentors and teacher education faculty were asked to identify ways that the practical skill development of teacher candidates might be improved while they are in the field. Forty-seven percent of the teacher education faculty indicated more modeling, both on campus and in the field. With the mentors, forty percent indicated more meaningful, focused observations with follow-up coaching. Combined, thirty-eight percent of the faculty and mentors indicated increased observations with coaching were needed and thirty-five percent indicated more modeling would improve skill development.

Question 5 asked for ways the following elements of a support system might be improved: mentoring/supervision, field related seminars, and the use of cohort groups/partnerships. Mentoring/supervision. Faculty (31%) and student teachers (37%) in the traditional program agreed that better communication between the participants regarding expectations was needed. Teachers in the TiR program identified more involvement by the mentors (75%) and the mentors cited increased visitations (20%) and early assignment of mentor (20%) as needed. Regarding the field related seminars, the teacher education faculty (26%) identified more time related to personal experiences and problem-solving, while an equal number (26%) felt that there should be more structure, development, and uniformity to the seminars. Among the student teachers, there was general satisfaction with the seminars, although seventeen percent felt that there should be more hands-on work and an emphasis on essential information. The TiR's called for

an emphasis on the practical (29%), identifying such items as management, how to teach, and student selected topics. Some of the mentors (13%) also identified an emphasis on the practical. Regarding partnerships and cohorts, thirty-four percent of the total group indicated that the use and development of cohorts and partnerships should be increased.

Question 6 focused on the assessment and development of the softer qualities of effective teachers, qualities such as caring, empathy, belief in students' worth, and love of learning. Overall, forty percent of the respondents felt that these qualities could be assessed through observation. Nineteen percent indicated the use of physical evidence such as videotapes, journals, letters, and tests. Sixteen percent identified the interview as a means for assessment. Twenty-two percent were unsure or did not believe it could be done. Regarding the development of these qualities, thirty-six percent indicated modeling the characteristics would encourage their development. Twenty-three percent indicated field assignments with support and encouragement, and fourteen percent suggested on campus, in-class activities might develop these qualities. Twenty-two percent indicated they were unsure or believed that it could not be done. Interestingly, fifty-nine percent of the faculty and mentors believed in the power of modeling, while the figure for the student teachers and TiR's dropped to nineteen percent.

Implications and Discussion of Results

As indicated in the literature, classroom management/discipline remains a significant concern for the beginning teacher (Boyce, 1997). It remains a significant problem for student teachers (Tulley & Chiu, 1995; Britt, 1997). It surfaced in the survey as the most strongly identified skill required before placement. It was also identified as a subject for

field related seminars. Classroom management/discipline remains a difficult skill to acquire before placement in a regular teaching position. It appears from Question 4 that all four approaches to skill development (modeling, coaching, guided practice, and self-directed trial and error) are powerful tools in the acquisition of teaching skills. Due to the persistent nature of the classroom management/discipline problem for beginning teachers, further study of the acquisition of this skill is needed, particularly with respect to the above four approaches.

The second recommendation focuses on the selection of candidates for alternative licensure positions. Just over half (51%) of the respondents identified observation of candidates teaching children as a means to assess teaching skills. Although it is time consuming and perhaps costly to arrange for a demonstration lesson or a substitute teaching opportunity, the potential resultant data could have considerable value for selection purposes, and would add nicely to oral interviews and written materials.

The third recommendation centers on Questions 3 and 5, which focus on increasing the collaborative work among the stakeholders invovled in teacher education programs. The recommendation is a simple one: better communication. As indicated in the surveys, this takes many faces. Better communication of expectations, both to the teachers in training and to the teachers working cooperatively with them in the public schools. This would call for more meetings involving not just teacher education faculty, but liberal arts faculty, public school people, and appropriate advisory groups. Increased collaboration of this kind could also result in more substantial partnerships and cohort groups.

The fourth recommendation addresses the utilization of modeling in teacher development. Modeling appears to be a very effective tool for the Metro traditional licensure program. The data indicates that the TiR program could benefit greatly from increased opportunities to observe master teachers modeling best practices. This would be costly, but money well spent.

The fifth recommendation centers on the last question in the survey, the assessment and the development of the softer qualities of the effective teacher, qualities such as caring, empathy, and belief in students' potential. Clearly, further investigation into this question is required. Can these qualities be assessed and/or developed through the use of modeling? If so, how does this work? Can in-class activities or field work assignments develop these qualities in teaching candidates? If so, how does that work? Further investigation of these questions could produce valuable data regarding the development of these elusive qualities.

The sixth recommendation centers on the very well thought out and implemented Aurora Public School mentoring component of the Metro State TiR program. The mentors cited in this study were all from the Aurora program. The recommendation is to identify ways to replicate the Aurora mentoring program on a larger scale. The TiR program in the Aurora Public Schools is a relatively small one (16 second-year TiR and 10 first-year). Kay Shaw is the Director of Staff Development for the Aurora Public Schools and directs the Aurora component of the Metro State TiR program. The Aurora component has established an early record of success. In a recent interview, Ms. Shaw supported that record by citing a high retention rate (only two TiR have left the program) and the very positive evaluations of the Teachers-in-Residence. After completion of one

year in the program, Ms. Shaw indicated that the Teachers-in-Residence compared favorably with traditionally trained first-year teachers.

The key to the success of the program, according to Shaw, is a solid mentoring program, featuring a teamwork approach with a strong accountability component. First, it is important to create early matches between mentor and new teacher, the earlier the better. The program is designed to match a TiR with the same mentor for two years. The TiR participates in both the Metro program and the district induction program. Second, there is on-going monitoring. At the onset, the new teachers are given a timeline which notes the pre-scheduled induction meetings with agendas set in advance. There are meetings for new teachers and meetings for mentors. The mentors are also required to keep a log of their meetings with the new teacher, including reflections. The mentors are asked to turn in the logs weekly. Thirdly, compensation is also a key element. Mentors can receive between six and twelve hundred dollars per year for their work. An interesting, newly added feature to the Aurora program an on-line chat room. This is a website, open only to new teachers, that provides an opportunity for new teachers to candidly discuss their experiences. In summary, the keys to success for a mentoring program are: early matching, a teamwork approach, on-going mentoring with accountability, and compensation. The Aurora induction process has been described in detail in Susan Villani's 2002 book entitled Mentoring Programs for New Teachers, 32-42.

The seventh recommendation concerns funding. A quality alternative licensure program requires adequate funding to provide release time for observations, training for public school personnel, and compensation for mentoring. Aurora not only pays TiR

mentors between $600.00 and $1,200.00 per year, but also provides some release time for observation. As stated previously, compensation is a key element in the success of this program. On the other hand, traditional licensure programs currently ask public school teachers to supervise field experience students for free. They are asked to assess, develop, and verify that proficiency in the evergrowing list of standards and competencies has been achieved. They are asked to do quality work and do it without compensation. Can the public expect even quality of work under this condition? Hardly. Education policy makers are asked to consider this question: Would you opt for open heart surgery performed by a surgeon who was trained on a pro bono basis? Understandably, no one wants to die on the surgeon's table, but we are talking about the education and development of your children. Please fund teacher education programs properly.

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